



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES EVALUATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of May 31, 2022
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Mohan Boodram, Chair
Brenda Burdick, Vice Chair
JD Chesloff
Karen Kowalczyk
Robert Reilly

Others in Attendance

Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

All attendees participated virtually.

Upon establishing a quorum of the Presidential Evaluation Committee Members present, Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and began discussion of the President's performance evaluation for FY22. Chair Boodram noted that President Birge had provided his self-evaluation, and that it had been shared with Committee members.

Before discussing the President's specific FY22 goals, Trustees discussed significant events of the year. These include, but are not limited to, the hiring and onboarding of three vice presidents, enrollment trends, continued response to the COVID pandemic, and the capital campaign.

Enrollment at MCLA continues to trend negatively with losses at the College outpacing the other state universities. The institution of new programs such as nursing, and the athletics addition of men's and women's ice hockey are anticipated to reverse the enrollment trend over the long term. The return to in-person visits is also expected to help the College as students tend to enroll at a higher rate when they have the opportunity to visit the campus.

With regard to geographical location, Trustees discussed the pandemic trend of students enrolling to institutions closer to home and how the lower population of the region could have impacted the Colleges enrollment. Trustees also discussed availability of data on enrollment trends and what that data might indicate as reasons for declines.

The College's Pathways Project proposed to DCAMM for funding was discussed. DCAMM continues to deny the College's proposals for campus building renovations for which one building, Mark Hopkins Hall, specifically has been indicated in surveys from students as a deterrent to attending MCLA. President Birge continues efforts to secure funding and is working with members of the Berkshire delegation on alternate ways to have funding secured in the state budget.

With regard to the College's COVID response, Trustees agreed that the President and staff have been extremely agile in their response.

The fundraising campaign has gotten off to great start with several significant major gifts secured as mentioned in the President's self-evaluation.

Trustee Reilly commented on the President's efforts and ability to be agile during the hiring of three new vice presidents and the ongoing pandemic. Efforts continue with a forward focus on, for example, developing new programs to attract students, and adjusting divisions to actively address enrollment concerns.

The President's continued investment in DEI efforts are evident in his involvement with a local inclusive leadership cohort, and the College's appointments of women of color to significant leadership roles.

The College's social mobility and top 10 public liberal arts college rankings by the US News and World Report are important to include in the President's evaluation.

The President's goal to establish a reporting dashboard was discussed. While this reporting is important, it is understood why it continued to be a low priority during the pandemic. Renewed efforts will be requested as the pandemic wains and staff return to more routine work. This tool is helpful for trustees in managing the long-term health of the institution, and to aid in the onboarding of new Trustees to the Board.

Trustees returned to discussion of the Pathways Project and the impact it will have on increasing enrollment. Improvements as proposed would improve student success and persistence to graduation. Data on the enrollment impact of the opening of the Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation will be sought.

With regard to financial reporting, Trustee Kowalczyk noted that she continues to receive reports and data when she requests it, and that questions are always answered timely.

Chair Boodram commented on the Commissioner's efforts to get the state system as a whole to raise presidential compensation across the board as opposed to an inflationary adjustment. A study on presidential compensation that was shared with board chairs helps support this position.

Relative to student experiences, Trustee Chesloff noted that the campus community was very responsive during COVID. Staff were sensitive to isolation of students, worked toward creating normalcy, and were respectful of the campus experience.

Trustees discussed national crises and the President's support to campus community, and communication responses which have been handled thoughtfully and quickly.

Trustee Burdick agreed to summarize the Committee's evaluation and asked that members send her their summaries associated with the goal each agreed to steward by June 7. This Committee will meet on June 21, 2022 at 10 a.m.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m. by Chair Boodram.